

Bavarian News

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U.S. Army Garrisons Grafenwoehr, Hohenfels, Ansbach, Schweinfurt and Garmisch

December 8, 2010

Culinary Arts Team takes bronze



Senior Chief Justin Reed cuts the meat for the main course during the Culinary World Cup's hot kitchen competition in Luxembourg. The team placed third overall in the competition.



Left: This sculpture is one of several created by team sculptor Sgt. Trent Skinner, a U.S. Army Reserve Soldier, who distinguished himself at the competition. The sculptures accompanied the meals on the cold food table, above.

Sculptor wins 1 gold, 5 silver, and 1 bronze

Story and photos by
Susanne Bartsch
USAG Grafenwoehr Public Affairs

LUXEMBOURG — The U.S. Army Culinary Arts Team finished the Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg, Nov. 25, with a bronze medal for the hot dinner portion of the competition.

The competition consisted of a cold food table display featuring seven three-course meals and the preparation of a hot, three-course meal for 100 people on a field kitchen. The team won gold for its cold food table, Nov. 20.

This year, USACAT competed against nine military teams from other countries.

The Culinary World Cup went

to the Swedish Military Team this year, with the military teams from Switzerland and Germany coming in second and third respectively.

"It's been a humbling experience and an honor to work and support this great team that has worked tremendously hard for nearly two months. The medals that they earned are well-deserved," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Russell Campbell, the USACAT team manager.

During the competition, Sgt. Trent Skinner, a U.S. Army Reserve Soldier and the team's sculptor, won one gold, five silver and one bronze medal for his sculptures that accompanied the meals on the USACAT's cold food table.

The Culinary World Cup is held every four years in Luxembourg. In 2012, the USACAT will participate in the Cooking Olympics to be held in Erfurt, Germany.

Garrison has a new pet project

Story and photo by
Jeremy S. Buddemeier
Managing Editor

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — After several months of collaboration with a community working group, the garrison is set to release a new pet policy in the coming weeks for residents with pets in government housing.

The new five-page document will combine local Bavarian government regulations, the Joint Multinational Training Command's dangerous dog policy and veterinary treatment facilities' policies, and clarifies pet ownership responsibilities.

"The biggest problem we have regarding pet ownership in the Grafenwoehr footprint is education, awareness and basic pet responsible owner issues," said Col. Vann Smiley, U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr commander, who owns a 5-year-old black Labrador retriever and a 2-year-old Bijon Frise.

Included in the policy are: the number of pets allowed per household (two, such as a cat and a dog, and a "reasonable" number of other small contained pets like hamsters and fish); prohibited dogs in accordance with host nation laws, ownership responsibilities and the consequences for violations.

In addition, residents are required to register their pets at the on-post veterinary treatment facility within two weeks of arrival. For many, however, this requirement seems to have gotten lost in the PCS shuffle.

"I'd guess probably 40 percent of the pets on post aren't registered," said Tony Frazier, garrison business manager, who is a member of the pet policy working group.

Frazier said registering allows the garrison to ensure owners are accountable for their pets. The garrison is currently offering a 45-day grace period for those who missed the initial two-week window.

Room to roam

In addition to the revamped pet policy, the garrison and pet working group also have established two dog parks at Grafenwoehr and Rose Barracks.

Though the dog parks are Spartan compared to their counterparts in the States, amounting to a fenced-in field where dogs can run or lounge leashless, Frazier said if additional funding is secured, the parks could receive upgrades

See POLICY, page 16

Soldiers and community members will volunteer at the Amberg and Weiden tierheims, Dec. 13. Contact Tony Frazier, 475-1500, for more information.

Blackhawks unveil partnership tree

Partnership enhances quality of life for Soldiers, families and local community

by **Maj. Joseph Buccino**
*172nd Infantry Brigade
Public Affairs*

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — Against the backdrop of a snowy late-November sky, the 172nd Separate Infantry Brigade, "Blackhawks," unveiled their partnership tree, Nov. 24, as a lasting tribute to the support provided to the brigade's Soldiers and families by the local communities.

The ceremony, attended by Joint Multinational Training Commander Brig. Gen. Steven L. Salazar and Garrison Commander Col. Vann Smiley, also marked the official beginning of the brigade's sponsorship program which pairs local German families with the families of the Blackhawk Brigade.

This program, the first of its kind in Germany, is designed to give the Blackhawk families an added sense of integration into the local communities and added support while the Soldiers of the brigade deploy to Afghanistan next summer.

"The idea is that when the Soldiers are deployed, family members who have created a



Photo by Sgt. Charles D. Crail

Above: Marking the launch of the 172nd Separate Infantry Brigade German-American Sponsorship Program, Nov. 24, families from both nations joined together for cake and refreshments in the brigade headquarters.

Right: Soldiers of the 172nd Separate Infantry Brigade hoist the brigade colors on the newly unveiled partnership tree, in front of the brigade headquarters, Nov. 24. More than 600 people participated in the event.

friendship with German families now have another opportunity... to share and if the relationship grows and becomes strong, it serves as a source of comfort," said Col. Frank Zachar, commander, 172nd Sep. Inf. Bde.

Amidst a throng of more than 600 German civil leaders, American Soldiers, and families from the German and American communities, Zach-

ar explained the significance of the partnership tree.

Standing 68 feet tall and 29 feet wide, the tree is adorned with the crests of Pressath, Eschenbach and Kirchenthumbach, along with the brigade's three Task Forces and the Bundesforst.

"Rising high above the surrounding building to dominate the skyline, no one can enter the brigade headquarters with-

out witnessing this reminder of what makes our mission possible; our German hosts and neighbors," Zachar said.

When a German neighbor family "adopts" an American family through this ground breaking program, the combined effort between local communities and the military community strives to bring together German and American

See 172ND, page 16



Photo by Spc. Robert J. Holland



Italian Christmas

Venice, Verona and Trento offer visitors a mixture of Christmas markets, holiday traditions and delicacies.

See page 11.

Jared visits Graf

Netzaberg students take notes from a "regular" celebrity who lost it all.

See page 3.

S-furt send-off

Children of deployed Soldiers connect with their parents using personalized pillowcases and popcorn.

See page 6.

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Bavarian News

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Water Tower art by Dane Gray

Commander's Message



Winter requires adjustments

The Grafenwoehr Military Community has enjoyed its first several days of snow and certainly not its last. Operating and functioning in winter weather is not new to those that have been here for awhile.

For folks new to the community and its weather, winter can require a significant adjustment. Regardless, U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr appreciates the continued community patience for winter weather and its impact on the garrison. We don't get everything right!

We use weather forecasting provided by the 21st Operational Weather Squadron, which you can view at: <http://ows.public.sembach.af.mil/index.cfm?section=5day&loc=ETIC>. In addition, community members can access up-to-date road conditions in each community by calling 475-ROAD (7623), CIV 09641-83-7623 or online at www.hqusareur.army.mil/g3/road_conditions/default.asp.

We have to consider both on and off post community members. We also monitor what local municipalities are doing such as Amberg and Weiden. We have

to prioritize limited roads and ground personnel, equipment and supplies, and be prepared for a long winter season.

Community members must also pitch in and clear their sidewalks, driveways and cars and follow host nation rules and regulations. At the end of the day, depending on where you live and your personal circumstance, exercise common sense when it comes to safety this winter.

Community support

Now is a great time to get out and support Vilseck High School winter sports, including basketball, wrestling and marksmanship teams. Visit www.vilshs.eu.dodea.edu or call 476-2864, CIV 09662-83-2864 to learn more about programs this season.

In addition, don't forget to have fun



and support Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation winter sports through its Outdoor Recreation Program. See the next edition of the *Bavarian News* for a full listing of winter sports activities for the entire family.

Enjoying responsibly

I would also encourage everyone to get out into the community and participate in your local Christkindlmaerkte and local events. Share your time with single Soldiers who do not have families here.

Additionally, December is National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month. Enjoy the spirit of the season, but please do so responsibly.

Lastly, on behalf of the entire garrison, please have a safe and enjoyable holiday season, und Froehliche Weihnachten!

Col. Vann Smiley
Commander, U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr

Blackhawks prepare to deploy

Soldiers and families of the 172nd Separate Infantry Brigade, the Department of Defense announced the scheduled deployment of the 172nd Infantry Brigade to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Our nation remains engaged in a war in Afghanistan and the 172nd Infantry Brigade will play a vital role in that engagement. I am well aware the formal announcement will create an increased level of anxiety among some of you. I want to ease concerns by emphasizing this brigade is fully resourced by our higher headquarters in its preparation for this deployment.

To help families cope with the challenges ahead, I am committed to keeping you informed about the details of our upcoming mission. Our families are critical to our success, whether we are at Grafenwoehr, Schweinfurt or de-

ployed to Afghanistan. The below information answers some basic questions you may have. Please utilize your chain of command and Family Readiness Group Leaders to clarify any additional questions or concerns.

- This brigade will deploy in the summer of 2011.
- Our deployment will be for 12 months.
- Any Soldier currently set to DEROS 90 days prior to the start of deployment may be involuntary extended in order to serve the entire deployment.
- Any Soldier currently set to exit military service prior to or less than six months after deployment, will be offered the opportunity to extend in



order to serve the entire deployment.

- The brigade will take block leave Dec. 18, 2010 – Jan. 5, 2011 and again prior to deployment in the summer of 2011.
- Throughout the next six months we will conduct training to prepare for this mission to include a mission-readiness validation exercise in March 2011 at Hohenfels.
- We ask that our families prepare emotionally and mentally for the long hours to come. Your FRG can place you in contact with the military and civilian agencies available to support you. Additionally, we have established a Blackhawk Resiliency program which provides a series of exercises and coping skills you may draw on during this period and throughout the deployment.

I ask everyone to be aware that there are always a lot of

rumors before and during a deployment. Rumors, while oft-spread by well-intentioned people, represent a threat to the morale and readiness of our Soldiers and families. Stamp them out by communicating regularly with your chain of command or chain of concern within the Family Readiness Group. Additionally, the brigade Facebook page serves as a platform for all accurate, approved brigade information.

I am honored to serve with the Soldiers and families of this great organization. Together we can ensure our Soldiers are fully prepared for this mission and our families are prepared and well cared for throughout the entire deployment. Blackhawks!

Col. Frank Zachar
Commander, 172nd Infantry Brigade

Thanks is a reward

Whenever anyone has thanked me for "all you do as a military spouse," I secretly feel kind of embarrassed. It is really nice of them to think of me. It is so sweet of them to include me in the Veterans Day festivities. But I am already being thanked. A lot. With gusto. By my own sailor.

See, what's crazy is that he actually thinks that I am his reward for deployment. Yeah, little ol' me. I'm his reward for having the duty all the time. I'm his reward for working Christmas Day. I'm really the only benefit he cares about.

That sounds incredibly vain, doesn't it? Or it sounds like I must devour every sex tip in Cosmo or Maxim. But that isn't the case. When I'm talking reward, I'm not talking about sex exactly, I'm talking about acceptance, encouragement, self-sacrifice.

I'm talking about, well... love.

That isn't one of the things Congress can really list in the military benefits package. Be-

cause it isn't theirs to give. Just think of your own life. What is better than having someone love you the way you are? If that wasn't important to human beings, it wouldn't make such a great eHarmony commercial.

People really do want to be loved for their true selves. Even military people. They want to be loved for having a great sense of humor and for always doing the laundry and for bringin' home the bacon. But I think they also want to be loved for that part of them that is military. They want to be loved and admired for the part of them that is well suited to protecting and defending and waging war.

Think about it: How cool would it be to have someone who truly knows you — knows you well enough to clean your hair out of the drain and ignore your constant giggling and kiss you even though you dip and spit — how cool would it be to have them love you anyway? How awesome would it be to have someone who listens to



your whining when you're sick and you're complaining about the unit and still thinks that you are worth waiting for—five months, eight months, a year?

That's showing some love, man. These military spouses go ahead and move around with their sailor even though it costs money. They pack up their lives and give up their jobs to be with their soldier. They move to Alamagardo, NM with their airman. They wrestle with the school system in San Diego for their special needs child just so they can be with their Marine. They tell the kids that mommy can't come to the swim meet because she has an important job to do in Afghanistan.

And what about these military couples who are both in the military? Shoot, they have to be both warrior and reward.

That's a job.

We Americans can offer our military members bonuses for dangerous duty. We can honor their courage. We can stop them on Veteran's Day to shake their hands sincerely. But know that the real military reward, the one that lasts, comes from our service members' real relationships with real people. It comes from military spouses and military children. From boyfriends and girlfriends who wait. From parents who honor the adult that comes home. And that's the reward that they deserve.

Jacey Eckhart is a military life consultant in Washington, DC. She is the author of "The Homefront Club" and the voice behind the award-winning CD "These Boots." Facebook Jacey or contact her at jacey@jaceyeckhart.com.

Several punished for their offenses

by JMTC Office of the Staff Judge Advocate

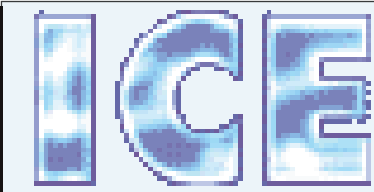
News Release

At a special court-martial, empowered to adjudge a bad-conduct discharge, from Nov. 29–30, Pvt. (E-1) Carl S. Bevers, C Company, 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, 172nd Infantry Brigade, in accordance with his pleas, was found not guilty of one specification of failure to report (Article 86, UCMJ). Bevers was found guilty, contrary to his pleas, of one specification of attempted wrongful appropriation (Article 80, UCMJ), of one specification of violating a lawful general regulation (Article 92, UCMJ), of one specification of larceny (Article 121, UCMJ), five specifications of assault (Article 128, UCMJ), one specification of disrespect towards a superior commissioned officer (Article 89, UCMJ), one specification of resisting apprehension (Article 95, UCMJ), two specifications of disorderly conduct, drunkenness (Article 134, UCMJ) and three specifications of communicating a threat (Article 134, UCMJ). The military judge sentenced Bevers to be confined for a period of four months and to be discharged from the service with a bad-conduct discharge.

At a special court-martial empowered to adjudge a bad-conduct discharge convened in Schweinfurt, Germany, from Nov. 22–23, Spc. David Golden, 902nd Engineer Company, 15th Engineer Battalion, 18th Engineer Brigade, was found guilty, contrary to his pleas, of one specification of false official statement (Article 107, UCMJ), one specification of larceny of government property (Article 121, UCMJ) and one specification of adultery (Article 134, UCMJ). The panel sentenced Golden to be reduced to the grade of private (E-1) and to be confined for a period of 150 days.

At a general court-martial, Nov. 9, Pvt. Roy Buhrow, A. Company, Task Force 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 172nd Infantry Brigade, was found guilty, in accordance with his pleas, of one specification of failure to report (Article 86, UCMJ), three specifications of willful disobedience of a superior commissioned officer (Article 90, UCMJ), one specification of drunkenness – incapacitation for performance of duties through prior wrongful indulgence in intoxicating liquor (Article 134, UCMJ), one specification of assault with means of force likely to produce death or grievous bodily harm (Article 128, UCMJ) and one specification of drunk and disorderly conduct (Article 134, UCMJ).

The military judge sentenced Buhrow to be confined for three years and to be discharged from the service with a bad-conduct discharge. A pretrial agreement with the convening authority capped confinement at 26 months.



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Kean breathes ‘green’ air into class curriculum

Host nation teacher honored for environmental stewardship

Story and photo by
Molly Hayden
Staff Writer

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — Even the most disinterested student can’t help to be mesmerized when walking into Elfriede Kean’s classroom. It’s brightly colored and full of life. Plants and fruit tress line the window sill, a five foot tall tree sits in the corner and a real bird’s nest takes refuge on her crowded desk.

The Host Nation Teacher for Grafenwoehr Elementary School has provided German language and cultural lessons to students for more than 20 years. Her teaching methods, however, are more than textbooks and written tests. Kean is one teacher who goes beyond the stature of her lesson plan to include hands-on environmental stewardship.

There is no incentive behind this besides the pure joy of teaching and the benefit to students and society at large for a better future.

Kean’s efforts to provide educational experiences showcasing the importance of nature, working closely with the Grafenwoehr Directorate of Public Works’ Environmental Division and Utilities Branch to establish sound lesson plans for students, have not gone unnoticed.

Recently, Kean was honored and awarded the Environmental Award 2008–2009 for the county of Neustadt.

This prestigious award is given to individuals who promote and encourage environmental practices and demonstrate leadership for the environment.

Col. Vann Smiley, U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr commander, was among the attendees at the award ceremony.

“Frau Kean’s personal effort and energy can be singled out as a significant contribution to ‘environmental’ awareness amongst our children as well as the greater Grafenwoehr Military Community,” said Smiley. “This nests ex-

tremely well with USAG Grafenwoehr initiatives towards energy efficiency and environmental stewardship.”

In her first year teaching at Grafenwoehr elementary school 22 years ago, Kean implemented a paper recycling program. Her efforts have since graduated to teaching young children about wind and solar energy and the importance of composting and recycling.

“It’s the future of all people in this world,” said Kean. “We have no other planet and I’m afraid many people do not see the importance of protecting it.”

Kean debunks many environmental misconceptions with hands-on learning, including field trips to recycling centers to see how recycled products are sorted and shipped to various facilities to become something new, as well as power plants, allowing the children to see firsthand the value of alternative energy sources.

Digging in the dirt is also a favorite for students and teacher alike as students hike through the woods to learn about bees, worms and other animals, and the role they play in nature.

“Hands-on experience teaches children more in a minute than I can talking about it for an hour,” said Kean. “If they see the importance of nature and the part it plays in their everyday lives, they will hopefully become more aware in the future and pass along what they have learned to others.”

Kean breathes “green” air into her student’s curriculum using innovative methods and approaches. She excites the children with every changing lesson plan and helps develop young minds to perceive the world differently.

“It’s up to them now,” said Kean. “Our future is in the hands of these children.”

And with Kean’s guidance, the future looks bright.

Elfriede Kean showcases a real bird’s nest she brought in to show her class. Beyond her duties as the Host Nation Teacher for Grafenwoehr Elementary School, Kean builds environmental stewardship lessons into her daily curriculum.



Garrison conducts safety stand-down training, drills

by **U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr Public Affairs**
News Release

U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr conducted a safety stand down, Nov. 23, as part of an Installation Management Command safety stand down to raise awareness.

Garrisons across Europe were directed by IMCOM’s Commanding General Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch, to pause in the wake of an uptick in serious accidents IMCOM-wide that over the course of the year have claimed the lives of a Soldier and three Army civilians.

At U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr, more than 1,800 employees participated in the training according to Michael Saalborn, safety specialist for USAG Grafenwoehr.

Saalborn said the training was tailored based on employees’ work environments. For instance, office workers conducted fire and safety inspections, emergency evacuation drills, and leaders briefed their staff on accidents that have occurred in the past six months. Blue collar workers received hazardous materials training along with classes on chainsaw safety, forklift load security and confined spaces precautions. All employees received seasonal training such as winter driving tips and preparing for the long, cold Bavarian winter.

“To coin IMCOM’s commanding general, nobody came to work today planning to screw



Reinhold Bayer, safety specialist at U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr, conducts training on chainsaw safety during Grafenwoehr’s safety stand-down, Nov. 23.

Photo by William Whitman

up,” said Andy Bird, chief of staff, IMCOM Europe Region. “These fatalities were preventable tragedies, and though none of these accidents occurred in Europe we owe it to each other and to the victims and their families to step away from the fast pace environment of our work-

places for a day, take a deep breath and maybe, just maybe, change a behavior that might someday future prevent a similar tragedy, accident or injury.”

This stand down at Europe garrisons focused on the whole aspect of safety awareness,

from workplace safety, driving safety, and fire prevention, to seasonal safety, a particular point of concern in Europe.

“With the harsh and unpredictable nature of European winters, winter safety needs to be at the forefront of everyone’s mind and there is no better opportunity than before the snow flies to remind ourselves how to prepare and prevent,” said Mike Schwarz, IMCOM-Europe safety chief. “That runs the gamut from recognizing the signs of black ice on Europe’s highways to preventing slips and falls on ice and snow.”

“Across IMCOM Europe 22 work accidents occurred last year that resulted in injury, the majority of which were accidents involving a slip or a fall that resulting in injuries primarily to hands, wrists, shoulders and backs,” he continued. “Snow and ice removal at garrisons is a team effort, and Soldiers and employees need to lend a hand to help make walkways around the garrison safe, as DPW clearing efforts are often concentrated in high-risk, high-traffic areas like schools and child care centers.”

Total accidental fatality rates in Europe are nearly identical to the overall Army rate at 0.24 per thousand. Across USAREUR last year, there were seven total accidental fatalities from a variety of causes, including vehicle accidents, fire and one pedestrian fatality.

For more visit USAG Grafenwoehr’s website, www.grafenwoehr.army.mil/sites/support/safety.asp, and click on safety.

‘Subway guy’ promotes health, nutrition at Netzaberg schools

Story and photo by
Molly Hayden
Staff Writer

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — Few know his full name, but almost everyone knows who he is, including Netzaberg Middle School students.

“I saw him on a sign holding up a big pair of pants,” said eighth-grader NievJohn Ignaco.

“He lost a lot of weight just eating Subway sandwiches,” said Michael Wright, grade 7. “I didn’t know you could do that.”

Jared Fogle, known to most as “Jared the Subway Guy,” made his claim to fame losing 225 pounds in one year by eating Subway sandwiches every day. Since that time, he has starred in hundreds of television commercials and appeared at various public performances promoting the Subway Corporation. Additionally, he was featured in Men’s Health magazine and is the topic of numerous newspaper articles, (including



Jared Fogle, known to most as “Jared the Subway Guy,” shares his amazing story of losing 225 pounds eating healthy Subway sandwiches with Netzaberg Middle School students.

this one).

His story is an extraordinary one – and one that he continues to talk about 12 years later.

Currently touring military bases in

lowing up with a series of questions.

“How many of you like to play video games?”

Hands shot up in the air.

“How many of you like to eat sweets?”

More hands filled the air.

“Well, I like them a little too much,” said Fogle, adding that hours in front of the television playing Nintendo replaced physical activity. As his weight steadily increased, his self-esteem steadily decreased.

In March of 1998, as a freshman at Indiana University, Fogle’s weight peaked at 425 pounds. It became increasingly hard to function as a member of society. He could no longer see a movie, ride a bus, or fly in an airplane because he couldn’t fit in the seats. Even walking across his university campus was draining.

“I needed to make a change,” said Fogle, holding up an old pair of jeans, with a waist measuring 60 inches, an act which garnered gasps from the students.

So begins the story of the Subway guy. Every day, Fogle would eat a healthy six-inch sub, sans mayo, oil and cheese, and an additional one for dinner.

Fogle was motivated in this endeavor and the weight began to drop off. He soon began incorporating exercise into his routine and both his health and self esteem improved.

A year later, Fogle’s image was plastered on billboards across the world, and Subway’s sales sky-rocketed.

“I share my story in hopes of inspiring others to make better choices than I did regarding health and nutrition,” said Fogle. “And for them to know it’s never too late.”

While Fogle is not your typical celebrity spokesman, the allure lies in his validity. He is real and his story is tried and true.

“His story was motivating,” said eighth-grader Sammi Bidingier.

“And it’s a good lesson,” said Trebarious Wynn, grade 7. “Never give up and you can achieve your goals.”

ANA doctor, Stryker medics assist civilians

by **Spc. Jennifer Spradlin**

16th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KAKARAK, Afghanistan – The availability of medical care to treat the sick and wounded within a community is one of the most basic human requirements but for areas of Afghanistan it remains a work in progress.

“The WHO (World Health Organization) defines access to healthcare as being within two hours of walking distance of a functioning clinic but sometimes you may be within that two-hour zone but not be able to make the walk due to poor security or the terrain,” said Australian Maj. Oscar Aldridge, Combined Team Uruzgan Senior Medical Officer. “So much of Uruzgan doesn’t have access to a functioning civilian-lead health system but they’re getting there.”

One example of the short-term solution was a recent medical mission in Kakarak, Afghanistan, Nov. 22, lead by an Afghan doctor and medic from the 4th Brigade, Afghan National Army and a small team of 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment Soldiers who assisted in the effort.

“The security situation in Uruzgan doesn’t yet permit Afghan civilian health providers to get out and provide healthcare to a large portion of the population,” said Aldridge. “By enabling and supporting ANSF, in particular the Afghan National Army, to get out there and do activities like this, it allows people to access health-



Photo by Leading Seaman Paul Berry

Sgt. 1st Class James Currie, a combat medic with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, assists an Afghan National Army 4th Brigade doctor during a medical mission in Kakarak, Afghanistan, Nov. 22.

care when they otherwise couldn’t. It helps to develop the capabilities within the Afghan National Army and

it provides our guys a chance to get out there and connect with some of the locals as well.”

Situated inside a temporary tent, the makeshift clinic treated more than 40 Afghan citizens and Afghan Na-

tional Police for a variety of ailments ranging from an infected tooth to flu-like symptoms that coincide with the changing weather.

Functioning in a largely supporting role, the Stryker medics helped the Afghan doctor with the aid of an interpreter and focused on passing out vitamins and basic medical supplies to the locals. Although their primary duties are to provide patient care within the squadron, the opportunity to help the local civilians was meaningful.

“Medical care is one of those standard things that everyone should have. No one should be absent from medical care,” said Spc. Edwin Torres, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-2 SCR, combat medic. Torres said that healthcare is something that can be taken for granted in other parts of the world but not here.

“They were really excited to get medical care, especially for their families. A lot of males came over to have their children seen,” said Torres, a Novato, Calif., native.

Since the closest clinic is in Tarin Kowt, a trek of seven miles, the mission demonstrated the ability of the ANA and the Afghan government to step in and offer assistance to their citizens until a time when the civilian medical field is more established.

“By receiving healthcare from someone who works for the Afghan government it’s sending a message to the Afghan people that they can rely on their government to provide for their needs,” said Aldridge.

172nd Support Soldiers test their warrior skills before deploying

Story and photo by

Spc. Robert J. Holland

*172nd Infantry Brigade
Public Affairs*

SCHWEINFURT, Germany — The Soldiers of the 172nd Support Battalion, 172nd Separate Infantry Brigade, recently spent a week brushing up their warrior skills and building camaraderie at the squad level while also competing against each other.

The squad is the smallest team that many Soldiers will operate in. These Soldiers will work, live, and fight together. For some, like Command Sgt. Maj. Terry D. Burton, 172nd Sup. Bn., 172nd Sep. Inf. Bde., his very first squad leader shaped his entire Army career from private to sergeant major.

From November 15-19, the 172nd Sup. Bn. Soldiers tested their physical fitness, motivation and military knowledge. Each day brought a different challenge from running a mile wearing their gas mask, to calling for medical evacuations while traversing through a land navigation course.

The week-long training event was Burton’s brainchild. Burton said he was tasked by Lt. Col. Kenneth C. Kelley to help build morale and strengthen the resiliency within the 172nd Sup. Bn.

“You give me one week and I will improve morale,” Burton said. “I came up with 5 events which are created to build esprit de corps.”

The training also reinforced the 172nd Sep. Inf. Bde. Commander’s “team of teams” concept. Each event was a team exercise that would only be won or lost as team and not an individual soldier, echoing the Soldier’s Creed every Soldier knows and strives to live by; I will never leave a fallen comrade.

“I think by doing tough and realistic training like this,” Burton said, “it allows the leaders to reinforce the warrior ethos and the army values.”

The response among the Soldiers participating in the training has been very positive Burton said. He said one of the biggest things he has seen is the development of trust between the squad leaders



Soldiers of the 172nd Support Battalion, 172nd Separate Infantry Brigade, complete a medical evacuation during warrior skills training, Nov. 16, at Conn Barracks.

and soldiers.

“It was very informative, I learned a lot,” Spc. Latoya Dallas, 172nd Sup. Bn., said. “I am glad I did it. I feel more prepared for going downrange.”

Dallas said the training helped build teamwork and trust among the battalion’s Soldiers. She said developing this trust and teamwork now will be beneficial when deployed since everyone competing will be serving there together.

“The training is awesome,” said Staff Sgt. Timothy Hobbs. “It’s a good team building exercise. It really puts a lot of stress on getting ready for Afghanistan with using mental agility and physical fitness. It’s been a pretty grueling week and you really learn what you’re made of.”

Burton recalls the influence his first squad leader had on him and how it impacted his Army career and hopes the Sol-

diers participating in the week’s training can be just as inspired to be the best Soldier they can be.

“These squad leaders training here today are the ones that will be leading in Afghanistan,” Burton said. “The things that we are asking them to do today will help mold and prepare them to be tomorrow’s leaders.”



Uruzgan Provincial Chief of Police Brigadier General Juma Gul Hemat (left) discusses the status of a Pashtun woman and Hazara male who defied tribal rules and married without consent of the respective tribes.

Uruzgan couple fights for love

Story and photo by

Sgt. 1st Class

John Wollaston

Combined Team Uruzgan PAO

FOB ANACONDA, Afghanistan – Shakespeare could not have written a better tale.

In the dusty Uruzgan Province town of Khas Uruzgan there is a story every bit as dramatic as the Bard’s tale of young love and warring families. But instead of the Capulet’s and Montague’s it’s the Pashtun and the Hazara tribes and a provincial governor instead of a well meaning Monk hoping to bring the two groups together and maintain the peace in his province.

The story started 10 months ago when a woman from the local Pashtun tribe suddenly disappeared, only to reappear in another village with her new beau, a member of the Hazara tribe. The woman’s family members and tribal elders claimed that she was married; the Pashtun woman on the other hand, claims that she wasn’t kidnapped and that she was never married. And as an added twist, she declares she is truly in love with the Hazara man.

In Afghan culture, tribal

loyalty and affiliation trump all else. Marrying into or being associated with the wrong tribe brings untold shame, disgrace and in some cases death to the offender. Such is the case with the star crossed lovers in this tale. In Afghan social stature where Pashtun and Hazara are concerned “never the twain shall meet”.

“Where this all started to fall apart,” said the Special Forces Captain in charge of the fire base in Khas Uruzgan. “is when the family of the Pashtun girl went to the local Taliban Mullah for help and he sent his men to the Hazara village and kidnapped seven villagers including a Hazara female.

As if this tale of love and revenge hadn’t taken enough turns and twists already, the Hazara village retaliated, taking seven hostages of their own.

“In all the times I’ve talked to the mother,” the Green Beret Captain said. “She never once mentioned that her daughter (the Pashtun woman) was married.”

Nor was it ever discussed that the only people looking for the Pashtun woman, was

See ROMEO, page 16

News is addictive. If you need more, subscribe to USAG Grafenwoehr’s daily newsletter.

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Schweinfurt hosts to Europe-wide extraction exercise

Story and photo by

Charles Stadtlander

USAG Schweinfurt Public Affairs

SCHWEINFURT, Germany — Despite, or perhaps thanks to rainy and muddy conditions, a group of maintenance and ordnance Soldiers from U.S. Army Garrisons across Germany received crucial training in wheeled vehicle extraction and removal at Schweinfurt's Pfaendhausen Training Area over two weeks this November.

The 59th Ordnance Battalion from Fort Lee, Va. administered the training, directed mainly toward Soldiers working in maintenance fields. Schweinfurt played host to visitors from U.S. posts across Germany as well as troops from here. When asked if he came from Schweinfurt, a 1-77 Field Artillery Specialist responded with an emphatic, "Hooah!"

Soldiers learned how to right overturned vehicles and remove vehicles mired in several feet of thick, sludgy mud. According to Staff Sgt. Brian Payne, one of the instructors, disabled and inextricable trucks are a common occurrence during deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, where roads are rough and sometimes nonexistent. The burden falls on these maintenance Soldiers to haul the valuable vehicles out for recovery and repair.

The trainers used the Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck and



Two Soldiers watch as a Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck extraction vehicle is used to right a 5-ton M-923 from its side during training in Schweinfurt's Pfaendhausen Training Area.

M-1089 wrecker extraction vehicles. Soldiers learned the functions of flipping a truck using a winch and crane, using a large spade dug into the ground as a leverage point and building multi-directional winch anchors to overturn vehicles in precarious po-

sitions. Staff Sgt. Payne's eyes lit up when describing this last process.

"What I love about teaching the guys this is that it's physics at work," said Payne. "You build a series of pulleys yourself, you use the winch to lift the truck past 45 degrees and then

gravity takes care of the rest."

Lothar Rueckert, the garrison's environmental specialist, was on hand to monitor parts of the training. The 1,700 acre training reserve, often referred to as "Area M," contains zones recognized by the German gov-

ernment for ecological protection. Threatened animals such as crested newts, sand lizards and yellow-bellied toads reside within the zone.

"Military training is actually encouraged here," said Rueckert. He said the churning of the soil during digging and road-building exercises is essential to the animals' thriving. Additionally, reserving the area for the military for the past several decades has kept the land free from farming and fertilizers, forming one of the more pristine landscapes in the region.

Staff Sgt. Mark Whittington, an instructor of the extraction training, affirms that this stewardship is upheld by the Soldiers. "The trucks we haul out are drained of oil and hydraulic fluids," said Whittington. "You sure as heck can't have that in the States, so I know you can't have that in Germany. We look after the environment here."

In the rare case of residual fluid leakage, clean-up kits were on hand. The preservation of the training area will prove mutually beneficial for both the German environment and for continued training missions in this strategically-vital portion of the Schweinfurt garrison.

The 59th Ordnance Battalion will return to the Pfaendhausen area in early spring for another round of training. According to the instructors, this extraction training is the first conducted in Europe in 15 years. It is normally reserved for stateside garrisons.

Kids, deployed parents connect with pillowcases and popcorn

Story and photo by

Nathan Van Schaik

USAG Schweinfurt Public Affairs

SCHWEINFURT, Germany — Hundreds of Schweinfurt's deployed Soldiers will be separated from their loved ones during the holidays and Schweinfurt Elementary School is doing something about it. The school opened its doors on the night of Nov. 29 in the first of two evenings aimed at easing the burden on parents and elementary school students with loved ones downrange.

On Monday, more than a dozen school officials, teacher aides and volunteers hosted a night of activities aimed to give students an opportunity to send handmade cards and artistic creations to mom or dad.

The event's main attraction was a photo session allowing kids to personalize pillowcases to be mailed off to their deployed Soldier.

"We're doing this so fami-

I want to do this so my dad would always remember us while he's gone.

Corrado

9-year-old son of deployed Soldier

lies have time for themselves," said elementary school principal, Wilma Holt. "And we're doing it so children can send gifts back to mom or dad who may be deployed."

Christina Tuccitto is an Army spouse whose husband is currently deployed with the 15th Engineer Battalion. She has four boys and relishes the opportunity to connect them with their father.

"This gets the kids out and lets them make something for their dad," she said.

"I want to do this," her fourth-grade son Corrado said while stroking a paintbrush along a Christmas card. "I want to do this so my dad would always remember us

while he's gone."

While parents were provided the option to drop their children off, many stayed. But event organizers are hosting a second event focused more on giving parents a night off, and much deserved peace of mind.

The school hosts a movie and popcorn night Friday, Dec. 10 from 5-7 p.m. at the school.

"Drop your child off and let us entertain them while you prepare for the holidays," reads the event flyer. For more information, contact the school at 09721-96-6518.

"We want to give everybody a little break and we want to give parents time for themselves, or to shop," said Holt.



Schweinfurt Elementary School teacher, Wilma Hollander, shoots a photo of DeAnthony Wike, left, and his brother Dezmond Coleman. The photos will be used on pillowcases sent to their deployed father.

German Police enforce winter tire rules

by **USAREUR Public Affairs**

News Release

HEIDELBERG, Germany — A new law passed by the German parliament that more clearly defines the use of winter tires in Germany went into effect Nov. 29.

U.S. Army Europe Office of the Provost Marshal officials said the law now states that motor vehicles, including motorcycles and four-wheel-drive vehicles, must have clearly marked winter or all-season tires when there is black ice, snow, slush, ice or frost on German roads.

"A winter tire is any tire marked by the manufacturer with the snowflake logo or M + S symbol, which stands for mud and snow [matsch und schnee]," said Tom Lorenzini, of the USAREUR Vehicle Registry. Even all-season tires can have this M + S symbol, he added.

The German automobile association ADAC recommends tires bearing the snowflake logo at right -- sometimes also called the "three-mountain" logo -- be-

cause those tires meet the highest standards for winter driving.

The minimum legal tire tread depth for Germany is 1.6mm, although ADAC recommends 4mm for winter driving. Other countries have more stringent requirements -- Austrian law mandates 4mm minimum tread depth for winter tires, and other European countries have distinct winter driving laws as well. OPM officials said drivers should check with local authorities before crossing borders.

In some areas of Germany snow chains may be required during winter, but only as directed by police or road signs such as the one at left. The maximum speed limit while driving a vehicle with chains is 50 kilometers per hour.

While the law does not mandate calendar dates during which snow tires are required, German drivers often use the helpful rule of thumb "von O bis O" -- "from O to O," meaning snow tires should be put on in October and remain on until Ostern (Easter).



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Under the new rules, fines have been doubled. Drivers caught using summer tires in ice, snow or slush will be fined 40 euro -- up from 20 euro in previous years, and those who cause an accident or obstruct traffic because they used inappropriate tires during winter conditions will be slapped with an 80 euro fine -- up from 40 euro. In addition, some insurance companies may deny coverage to motorists driving with summer tires on wintery roads.

Safety experts warn, however, that winter tires are no magic potion against accidents and that drivers should always drive at reasonable speeds and keep a safe following distance from other vehicles.

Drivers who are unsure about winter tire requirements can contact their local vehicle registration or safety office. A list of vehicle registration locations and other information for U.S. forces personnel who drive in Europe is available at the USAREUR Registry of Motor Vehicles website at www.hqusareur.army.mil/rmv/default.htm.

This piece was compiled from a report by Robert Szoetek of the USAREUR Office of the Provost Marshal and other sources.

COMMENTARY

Beating the mental health stigma

by Jennifer Walsh Cary
BMEDDAC Public Affairs

VILSECK, Germany — When it comes to mental health, I've noticed most people prefer not to talk about it. It's almost as if bringing up the topic somehow implies they're suffering from mental health problems.

It's an unfortunate stigma that continues to plague our military communities. A stigma, I believe, that people will have to overcome individually.

First step? Know what to expect.

Recently, I put myself to the test and requested to go through the entire mental health process as a patient. My goal was to shed light on what actually happens behind closed doors in mental health.

Truthfully, it was like a routine medical appointment. Anti-climatic, I know.

The waiting room was full of people just like you and me. Maybe they were suffering from stress because their spouse is deployed or maybe they were having some anxiety because their finances weren't up to par. I reported with general stress. With a deployed spouse, a full-time job, the chore of buying winter tires and a dog that goes to the vet more than I go to the doctor, who wouldn't be a little stressed?

With mental health, you don't have to make an appointment so I walked up to the counter



Walsh Cary

and was given a stack of paperwork to fill out. Most of it was privacy information. I learned that unless I intended to harm myself or others that the conversation with the provider would stay between the two of us. It was a huge relief. Maybe it shouldn't be a big deal, but I wouldn't want my employer or anyone else to know I was there; just like I wouldn't want my employer to know if I was being treated for heat rash. It's no different in my book.

Since I didn't have an appointment, a nurse called me back to her office to prescreen me. She asked a lot of questions — most of which were required — and determined which provider I needed to see. There were a couple of questions that I didn't expect, like have I had thoughts of killing myself or was I having delusions.

After the brief interview, I went back to the waiting room. As I approached the counter to turn in my paperwork, I saw one of my co-workers in the hallway. Instantly I wanted to find a place to hide. All I could think was that every time I see him from this point forward he'll be thinking, "better be careful, this one

is crazy."

Clearly, I am not immune to the stigma. And while my gut reaction was to run, I decided to stay. Even though it was difficult, I was determined to beat the stigma.

Eventually I went back to the provider's office and we talked for almost an hour. I was surprised at how much stress I put on myself. I was also surprised at how much I enjoyed venting about it to a neutral party.

Sure, I went to my mom or my husband or my friends - I definitely don't internalize my feelings - but this was somehow different. I could say anything and it was met with open interest and without judgment.

It was awesome.

Afterward, I still felt like myself. I wasn't ashamed for going and if I ever feel like I need someone to listen, I won't hesitate to call this provider. For someone who wanted to run and hide when I was "spotted" an hour earlier, it says a lot about the quality of care I received.

Overall, the idea of seeing a mental health provider can be intimidating or a little scary, but in reality it's like a routine medical appointment. The real challenge is facing your personal stigma against mental health. I can tell you from experience that the care you receive is well worth the stress of fighting the stigma. Now more than ever, I believe it's OK to seek help.

a shot of advice

by Lt. Col. Stephen Linck
BMEDDAC

When it comes to the holiday season, people tend to ask more questions about how to stay healthy while not having to forgo the baked goods at work and the treats at home. As someone who prefers to eat treats, I thought it best to enlist the help of Capt. Jen Lee, our chief of Nutrition Care, who is more impartial when giving out nutrition advice. She tackled two of your questions for this edition of A Shot of Advice.

Q. Is it true that some people can gain five to 10 pounds during the holiday season (Thanksgiving to New Year's)? How concerned do I really need to be that the office potluck, Thanksgiving spread or sugar cookies are going to affect my waistline?

Thanks,
Paunchy in Pottenstein

A. Dear Paunchy,

There was a prospective study, which is a study that assumed the outcome first and then tested to see if the actual outcome matched the assumption, done by the National Institutes of Health in 2000 regarding holiday weight gain. The report indicated that Americans only gain one to two pounds between Thanksgiving and New Year's; fewer than 10 percent gained more than five pounds. The only factors that influenced weight gain were the level of hunger and the level of activity. While attending many of the office potlucks and holiday parties, find time to fit physical activity into your day. Focus on maintaining a balance between food intake and physical activity. Your waistline will thank you for moving!

Q. I'm a vegetarian and I often feel left out at holiday parties and potlucks because the main dish is always meat-based. Any suggestions on how to make people more aware of my eating habits without making them think I'm forcing my beliefs on them?

Thanks,
Vegan in Vilseck

A. Dear Vegan,

Being a vegetarian can be tough during the holiday season. Since the main dishes are usually meat-based, why not shift your focus to the side dishes? If you're going to a hosted party, letting the host know what you eat in advance will be helpful. Maybe you can politely offer to bring one or two of your favorite vegetarian dishes? You might surprise others about how good vegetarian dishes can taste. If you're going to a restaurant, call ahead to ask about vegetarian main dish options. Again, side dishes are good fall backs! If all fails, eat beforehand - or bring a snack - and just go to socialize.

If you need a shot of advice, e-mail your question to Lt. Col. Stephen Linck at brmc-pao@amedd.army.mil.

BMEDDAC partners with Edelsfeld

Story and photo by

Jennifer Walsh Cary
BMEDDAC Public Affairs

VILSECK, Germany — It's official.

The Bavaria Medical Department Activity and the neighboring town of Edelsfeld entered into a partnership, Nov. 19, during a ceremony at the town hall in Edelsfeld.

According to Col. Steven Brewster, BMEDDAC commander, the goal of the partnership is for the people involved to learn about and embrace one another's culture.

"We hope to learn more about you as a community and share in your customs and celebrations, as well as have you participate and share in ours," Brewster said during the ceremony. "I think we will find that we are very similar to one another."

The mayor of Edelsfeld, Hans-Juergen Strehl, echoed Brewster's

sentiments and said they were happy to partner with Americans, especially with BMEDDAC. The town also has a partnership with the 472nd Logistics Battalion, a German unit in Kuemmersbruck.

Strehl took this opportunity to give the attendees a brief walking tour of the town to include the kindergarten, church and fire department.

He also gave a brief overview of the community, which is formed out of 26 incorporated villages and has approximately 2,000 residents, 100 of which are American.

After the certificates were signed and the speeches were made, the new partnership was celebrated with toasting and a social hour.

"Our hope is that this partnership will lead to strong and lasting friendships between our communities and all of us who live in them," Brewster said.



Hans-Juergen Strehl, mayor of Edelsfeld, and Col. Steven Brewster, BMEDDAC commander, sign certificates acknowledging their new partnership at the town hall in Edelsfeld, Nov. 19.

Humor critical to surviving in cubicle city

by Karla Simon

U.S. Army Public Health Command (Provisional)

Surviving the move into a cubicle city takes a good sense of humor and creativity. As with any move, a new environment brings new challenges. Conditions in our work area undoubtedly influence our mood, physical health, productivity and sense of calm.

Everyone in the office should model good behavior and expect it from co-workers. A lot of potential problems can be alleviated by just adhering to "common" courtesy. Even people with different work and personal styles can sit on the other side of the cubicle wall and still get their jobs done.

Design space to fit your needs

Consciously organize your cubicle. Remove the visual "noise" that clutters your desktop. Designate specific areas for personal items and mementos and another area for ongoing projects and work-related resources. Add your personality but keep it professional. Remember to think ergonomically in the setup of your office furniture and equipment.

Keep work environment clean.

Use spill-proof containers to hold beverages. Clean up any spills or crumbs daily. Dispose of any food refuse in the break area garbage can and not in the trash can near your

desk. Take some time (at least once a week) to wipe down anything you use on a daily basis: your keyboard, your mouse and your phone. Don't forget equipment like fax machines, printers, copiers and other devices in common areas, particularly during flu/cold season.

Wash your hands

The single most effective thing you can do to stay healthy is to wash your hands regularly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when hand washing is not convenient. Always wash your hands after you sneeze, cough or blow your nose and after using the bathroom. Don't worry about appearing paranoid; wash your hands frequently throughout the day. However, it is not OK to spray your co-workers with disinfectant if they display symptoms of illness such as sneezing or coughing. Their symptoms may be related to seasonal allergies.

Mini-health breaks.

Exercise at your desk. Stretching, muscle strengthening and yoga can be done to work out kinks and stiffness that build up during the work day. Walk cube city when you have to get up to fax or pick up something from the printer. Remember to take mental breaks. Most people have those days when their last nerve is being severely trampled upon. The best thing

to do is just take a breather. Get out. Go for a walk. Take a nap in your car.

Make healthy food choices.

Start the day by eating breakfast. Fuel the body and mind to gear up for a day at work. Steer clear of vending machines. To combat midday slump and boost your metabolism, eat healthy snacks like yogurt, fruit, vegetables and nuts. Increase water consumption and limit your caffeine intake.

Don't make yourself at home.

Work is not home. Employers want their employees to feel comfortable, but remember this is **not** your living space. At home, you want to create an environment that promotes relaxation and rest. At work, you need your space to inspire you to focus on the tasks at hand.

Use these workplace tips at your workstation to promote your health and well-being and to enhance your productivity and comfort. Additional health information on hand washing, ergonomics, nutrition and other workplace health topics, can be obtained from the U.S. Army Public Health Command (Provisional) Web site at <https://usaphcapps.amedd.army.mil/hioshoppingcart>.

Editor's Note: Karla Simon is an industrial hygienist at the U.S. Army Public Health Command (Provisional)

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Search "U.S. Army Grafenwoehr" using Facebook's page search engine.

Christmas in Italy

...a shoppers dream



A giant star sculpture at the Verona Roman arena marks the holiday season in Piazza Bra, the location of the Santa Lucia market.

Tasty treats, handmade gifts are benefits for travelers spending Christmas south of the Alps

Story and photos by

Joy Chalmers

USAG Schweinfurt Public Affairs

From the rustic Alpine charm of Trento to the romantic palazzi of Verona and Venice, northern Italy brings a distinct charm to the holidays through inviting sights, smells and tastes. Here, visitors will find a mixture of ancient beauty and modern refinement among Christmas markets, holiday traditions and delicacies.

While not as elaborate or large as some of the holiday markets in Germany, the mercatini di Natale in northern Italy provides their own twist on the tradition. With a diverse set of offerings, shoppers can find stocking stuffers for all of the loved ones on their list. Along with browsing and buying local handmade gifts and crafts, enjoying the cuisine of the area is a highlight of any Italian Christmas market visit. Vin brulé, an Italian version of hot spiced wine, is always served along with local fare.

During the holidays, expect to find heartier versions of typical northern Italian cuisine. Creamy risotto dishes, savory meat dishes, artisanal cheeses and warm polenta are staples of the winter months. Also around the holidays, travelers can find pandoro, Verona's buttery holiday bread, and Milan's tasty version of the fruit cake, panettone.

Unlike the summer months when it's not uncommon to find yourself shoulder-to-shoulder with tourists, the winter months are much less crowded. November through February is considered the off-season and accommodations can be easily found for a fraction of their summertime rates. Be aware that Dec. 24-26, Jan. 1 and Jan. 6 are national holidays so most restaurants and attractions are likely to close.

Trento

The medieval town of Trento has one of the largest holiday markets in Italy and makes an excellent stop on your journey south. Set within the city's 13th century



Shoppers browse a few of the dozens of vendor stalls at the Trento Christmas market.

walls, this market offers a blend of handmade crafts and outstanding winter cuisine. The Sapori del Mercatino section, literally translated to "Tastes of the Market," offers a sampling of Trentino food and wine. Don't miss the polenta brustolada, grilled polenta over a wood fire or locally-cured speck with gnocchi. This year, the market is open through Dec. 23, from 10 a.m.-7:30 p.m.

Verona

One of Verona's most charming holiday traditions, Santa Lucia Day, Dec. 13, is celebrated by young and old alike. Similar to the American Santa Claus tradition, the children of Verona set out a list of gifts they want for Santa Lucia and a bowl of water and carrot for her donkey. If they've been good, they get a gift. The feast of Santa Lucia and the accompanying market in Piazza Bra is an exclusive Verona experience and has now become the symbol of Christmas for the city. The market hosts over 300 vendors in the shadow of the arena selling sweets and small gifts from around Italy. It only runs Dec. 10-13, from 9 a.m.-11 p.m.

Although the opera season at Verona's famous arena is over, throughout December Teatro Filarmonico hosts concerts, ballets and operettas performed several times per week.

Also worth seeing is VeroNatale, a festival of nativity art and tradition. This showcase exhibits over 400 variations of the Nativity scene inside the arena's underground passageways. The exhibition is open daily, Dec. 4-Jan. 23, from 9 a.m.-8 p.m.

Venice

Seated along the misty canals, Venice is a holiday shopper's dream.

The most famous Christmas market sits in Campo Santo Stefano, Murano's central square, and runs Nov. 29-Dec. 23. Unlike



Venetian ornaments and holiday decorations, like the rest of the city, lack little luster. Here, a Murano glass Christmas tree is just one of the many market vendors' offerings on the Campo San Stefano.

many other holiday markets, the fair is made up entirely of local craftsmen and chefs. Every year, a Christmas tree made entirely of Murano glass by one of the local artists is featured in the square. Along with an array of glass ornaments and gifts, the market vendors also sell traditional Venetian gifts like Carnevale masks, ceramics, jewelry and other Venetian craft specialties.

For those in search of the truly unique, the Mercatino dell'Antiquariato antique fair in Campo San Maurizio between Piazza San Marco and Campo Santo Stefano is held Dec. 17-19. Held only three times a year, this market offers unlimited gift options for the Italophile in your life.

Almost every evening offers a concert experience in one of the island's theaters or churches. A traditional mass at St. Mark's Basilica at midnight on Christmas Eve is one of the highlights of spending the holidays in Venice. Traditionally, the Church of the Frari on San Polo also holds a musical worship held Dec. 26, St. Stephen's Day.

While traditionally less rainy than autumn months, there is an increased chance of running into acqua alta, the common flooding of low-lying areas of Venice. If you plan to go to St. Mark's Square, bring waterproof rain boots.

For more details on scheduled events, additional markets and travel tips, visit www.visittrentino.it, www.tourism.verona.it and www.turismovenetia.it.

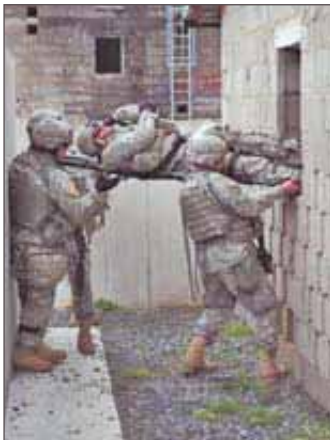


The illuminated Christmas tree in the middle of the Murano market is handmade by glass artists on the island.

18th Engineer Brigade conducts MOUT training



Photo by Staff. Sgt. Robert Becker



Pfc. Justin Palmer (left), combat engineer with the 18th Engineer Brigade, provides security as other Soldiers perform first aid on a casualty during Military Operations on Urban Terrain training in Grafenwoehr, Germany. Soldiers (above) from HHC, 18th Engineer Brigade remove a casualty from the building during MOUT training.

by **Spc. Aislinn Amig**
18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 18th Engineer Brigade, trained on Military Operations on Urban Terrain from Sept. 27 to Oct. 1 and again Nov. 1-12 at the MOUT site here.

Members of the 18th Eng. Bde. combat security team focused on dismount procedures during the training and further sharpened their skills in first aid, radio communications and room clearing techniques.

Spc. Michael Wilson, a bridge crewmember with the 18th Eng. Bde. and a native of Pocatello, Idaho, said during some of the training scenarios vehicles were inoperable and “we learned how we needed to react and work through it.”

“Having the Ultimate Training Munitions rounds provided the most realistic training that we have experienced during training missions,” said Pfc. Ethan King, a, 18th Eng. Bde. combat engineer from Fayetteville, N.C.

The UTM are paint-filled 5.56 rounds that resemble live ammunition with reliability and accuracy in order to give Soldiers a better understanding of getting shot at.

The team also used smoke grenades to simulate a realistic combat environment.

“Being able to practice proper placement and throwing of the smoke grenades was something not many of us were familiar with, and this gave us a chance to develop those skills,”

“We got to see what it would look like through the enemy’s eyes so we could learn from that the next time we were going through the training ourselves.”

Pfc. Eric Goldenthal
Combat engineer, 18th Eng. Bde.

said Wilson.

The Soldiers were also given the opportunity to play the opposing force at several points throughout the exercise.

“We got to see what it would look like through the enemy’s eyes so we could learn from that the next time we were going through the training ourselves,” said Pfc. Eric Goldenthal, an 18th Eng. Bde. combat engineer from Baltimore.

The training gave the Soldiers a better idea of what they will encounter in a deployed environment.

Soldiers, spouses have debt reduction options

Overseas Soldiers have rights regarding debt collections

by **Sean Kelly**

JMTC Office of the Staff Judge Advocate



Do you have unpaid debts? Is your stack of bills growing taller every month? Have you been harassed by frequent letters, phone calls or personal visits to you or your family which threaten legal action if you don’t repay your debts? Unfortunately, this kind of harassment is all too common.

When a debt is overdue, creditors will send reminders notifying you that they have not yet received payment. Soon after, the letters become more frequent and creditors may start making phone calls to your home. If they are not paid, creditors will hand over your debt to a third-party debt collector. These debt collectors can be especially threatening because, unlike a bank, the debt collectors do not count on your continued business and good will. They are only concerned with making you pay. And because they know that the Army requires Soldiers to pay their debts, debt collectors are especially persistent in harassing Soldiers and their families.

The good news is Congress has stepped in on your behalf, with the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA) and the Service Member Civil Relief Act. The FDCPA was designed to combat abuses by debt collectors and limit their ability to harass people who have incurred a debt. Under the FDCPA, a debt collector must notify you stating the name of the creditor and how much money you owe.

You then have 30 days to contest the validity of that debt. Even if you do not contest the validity of the debt, the debt collector must stop all communication if

you give written notice that you refuse to pay the debt or ask the collector to cease all communication. Also, once the debt collector knows you are represented by an attorney, all communication must stop.

The FDCPA prevents debt collectors from using a number of misleading tactics in order to get paid. Debt collectors may not attempt to collect any amount which is not expressly authorized by the original agreement creating the debt, threaten to contact anyone else regarding your debt, send letters falsely claiming to be sent from an attorney, falsely claim that a legal action is imminent, or threaten to take legal action when the debt collectors authority is limited to making telephone calls and writing collection letters.

As a Soldier stationed overseas, you are also covered by the Service Member Civil Relief Act (SCRA). As part of the SCRA, Soldiers who are stationed abroad may be protected from having to appear at legal or administrative proceedings back in the United States. The SCRA allows Soldiers to request proceedings against them be suspended for the time they are abroad. The Soldier must send a letter to the court explaining how their military requirements prevent them from appearing along with a letter from their commander stating the same. This prevents Soldiers from losing lawsuits by default simply because they cannot make it back to the U.S. to appear in court. To invoke this protection, consider seeing a legal assistance attorney to assist you in notifying the court.

Because it is the Army’s policy that Soldiers repay all of their just debts, the best policy is always to pay your bills on time. But if you are being asked to pay a debt you do not think is not valid, or if you are being harassed by debt collectors, it is important that you know your rights.

Editor’s Note: Sean Kelly is a legal intern at the 7th Army Joint Multinational Training Command Office of the Staff Judge Advocate Grafenwoehr Legal Center.

Interest rates for loans taken before entering active duty can be reduced

by **Charles Kee**

JMTC Office of the Staff Judge Advocate

Service means sacrifice. But it does not have to mean hardship. Did you know that service members can reduce interest on debts that existed prior to entry on active duty? They can, and the process is simple. If a service member is on active duty and his or her ability to pay the debt has been materially affected by reason of military service (for example, because of reduced income), the service member is entitled to a reduction of the annual interest rate on that loan down to 6 percent. This benefit extends to activated reservists as well.

All that is required is a letter to the creditor and copies of the orders that brought the service member to active duty status. Usually, that means the very first set of orders in the service record; the orders to basic training.

The letter to the creditor should include three things. First, in the subject line, it should clearly state the account number and the name of the account holder. Second, in the body of the letter, it should detail when the service member entered active duty and where the service member is currently assigned. Third, the letter should explain that the Service Members’ Civil Relief Act requires a reduction in annual interest to 6 percent and forgiveness, not deferment, of all interest over 6 percent. After completing the letter, the service member should enclose the

documents mentioned earlier in this article. The letter should then be sent to the creditor as certified mail through the local post office, as well as faxed.

This protection also covers debts held jointly with the service member’s spouse. It even covers secured debts under a bankruptcy plan; however, it does not cover student loans. Keep in mind, this 6 percent cap only applies to debts that existed prior to entering active duty. The service member must have taken out the loan before joining the armed forces.

Many service members believe that creditors are required by law to reduce interest rates on loans during deployments. This is a myth. While it is true that some creditors voluntarily agree to reduce service members’ debts while they deploy, they are under no legal obligation to do so.



Unfortunately, in some cases, creditors do not comply immediately with service members’ requests. Some creditors will claim to never have received a service member’s letter. When this happens, it is advisable to send the letter again certified mail, and retain copies of all the receipts and package tracking documentation. Other creditors will stall the process by demanding further documentation. Service members in this situation should resend the original letter and its attachments along with a copy of the relevant portion of the Service members Civil Relief Act, which can be obtained at the local legal assistance office. If the creditor still refuses to comply with this request, service members should seek legal assistance.

Editor’s Note: Charles Kee is a legal intern at JMTC’s Office of the Staff Judge Advocate Bamberg Law Center.

Debt checklist

- Did I take out this loan before I entered active duty?
- Is the annual interest rate above 6 percent?
- Has my ability to pay been materially affected by reason of military service?
- Is this a student loan? (If so, the interest rate cap does not apply.)
- Get creditor’s address and fax number.
- Get copies of orders sending me to active duty and extending my duty to the present.
- Write letter with account number and the name of the account holder in the subject line.
- Include information about when I started active duty in the letter.
- Request reduction of annual rate to 6 percent.
- Request forgiveness, not deferment, of all interest above 6 percent since I entered active duty.
- Enclose all relevant documentation with the letter.
- Fax the letter.
- Send the letter certified mail.
- Follow up with creditor to ensure receipt of the letter and compliance with the request.

Service members with questions about the Service members Civil Relief Act or this process should contact their local legal assistance office. 7A JMTC’s legal assistance offices can be reached at the following numbers:

Ansbach-Katterbach
467-2103, CIV (09802) 83 2103
Ansbach-Illesheim
467-4576, CIV (09841) 83 4576
Bamberg
469-7609, CIV (09513) 00 7609
Garmisch
466-2401, CIV (09472) 83 2401
Grafenwoehr
475-7114, CIV (09641) 838 7114
Hohenfels
466-2401, CIV (09472) 83 2401
Schweinfurt
353-8511, CIV (0972) 196 8511
Vilseck
476-2290, CIV (09662) 83 2290

Army in Europe retention stabilization rate soars above average

by **Spc. Adam P. Garlington**
USAREUR Public Affairs

HEIDELBERG, Germany – If you’re a United States Army in Europe Soldier with an expiration of term of service on or before Sept. 30, 2012, your window for reenlistment is open.

Continue to take advantage of free medical care, free educational benefits, free travel opportunities, and getting paid for exercising and eating breakfast by contacting a career counselor and reenlisting.

“As long as you’re qualified, no one is being denied reenlistment,” said Sgt. 1st Class James

Hatfield, the USAREUR senior retention operations noncommissioned officer.

When Soldiers have a choice, current station stabilization, which is choosing to reenlist for a current duty station, is the number one reenlistment option that USAREUR Soldiers choose, said Sgt. Maj. David Best, the USAREUR senior career counselor.

The USAREUR stabilization rate is usually about 5 percent above the average Army stabilization rate, Hatfield said.

Quality of life and stabilization are connected, Best said. In Europe, Soldiers sometimes face challenges such as being far from home and language barriers, but they feel a sense of

community and security that makes them want to stay.

The quality of life, leadership and benefits are major reasons why USAREUR Soldiers are interested in reenlisting to stay a part of the USAREUR team, Best said.

According to Best, in fiscal year 2010, the USAREUR retention goals were to reenlist 3,536 Soldiers, and USAREUR reenlisted 3,959 Soldiers.

Soldiers also want to work with quality leaders, and at USAREUR, the leadership is excellent, Best said.

The five standard reenlistment options are:

- Regular Army

- Current Station Stabilization
- Army Training
- Overseas Assignment
- CONUS Station-of-Choice

All five options are now available. Bonus rates that took effect Sept. 23 range from \$1,300 to \$40,000, depending on a Soldier’s rank, military occupational specialty and length of service extension, according to the USAREUR retention team.

The Army also has renewed the Bonus Extension and Retraining Program that allows Soldiers to retrain, reclassify and receive a bonus for their new MOS, the team said.

Hohenfels Soldier plays in continental soccer tourney

by Mark Iacampo
USAG Hohenfels Public Affairs

HOHENFELS, Germany – A Soldier with Company A, 2nd Military Intelligence Battalion, thrives on competition so much that he traveled more than 15,000 miles across three continents to represent Hohenfels and the U.S. Army in two world-class soccer tournaments.

Second Lt. Andrew J. Glubzinski earned a place on the Army team for the Armed Forces Men's Soccer Championships, and his performance in that tournament not only helped the Army grab the gold, but also led to his selection for the All Armed Forces team to represent the United States in the 2010 International Military Sports Council (CISM) Continental Men's Soccer Championship tournament.

"It was a great opportunity to spend time with soldiers from all over the Army, and ultimately from all the different services," Glubzinski said. "Interacting with a whole gamut of folks you just don't get to be around."

Joining the Army team involved applications, commanders' recommendations, and an impressive resume of past soccer achievements.

"I played four years at West Point," said Glubzinski. Recruited from Vardar III, one of the largest soccer clubs in Michigan, he started for three years, earning his way to team captain by his senior year.

Out of the 130 applicants, 30 qualified to attend a trial camp. From those, 18 were selected for the Army team.

Glubzinski appreciated interacting with other officers from around the globe. "We had a guy from Japan, a guy from Korea, couple of us from Germany, couple guys from Hawaii – geographically, the whole Army brought into this camp and got together."

The team trained at Fort Eustis, Va., for almost a month, before hitting the field in Florida for the Armed

Forces Championship. They started off the tournament with a victory against the Navy, scoring the game's only goal in the last 20 minutes. But their next two games did not go as well.

"At the end of the group stage of the tournament, out of all four services, we were in fourth place," said Glubzinski.

But the team rallied in the semi-finals defeating the Air Force 1-0. In the final battle against the Navy, the score remained 0-0 throughout regulation play.

"There was a lot of tension going into overtime," said Glubzinski. "They scored on us about five minutes into the first overtime, and we scored about a minute and a half later."

With the score still tied at the end of the first overtime, the teams engaged in a shootout where Glubzinski's goal keeping skills helped earn the Army the gold medal in a 4-3 victory.

Glubzinski's skill earned him the opportunity to represent the United States in the CISM Continental Men's Soccer Championship. "They picked a roster of 18 guys from all the services," Glubzinski said. "Basically, an all-star team from the tournament."

With only a little more than a week to prepare, the team played a lot of scrimmages, struggling to forge their new force into a cohesive unit. "The all-star team had a lot of forwards," said Glubzinski. "So, most of our training was just getting used to new positions, learning to work as a team."

The tournament took place in Paramaribo, Suriname, with teams from Brazil, Ecuador, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Suriname, Canada, and the United States.

"We're right by the equator," said Glubzinski, "so it was about 95 degrees with 95 percent humidity every day. It was very interesting circumstances to play soccer in."



Photo by James Fenner

Second Lt. Andrew Glubzinski, Company A, 2nd Military Intelligence Battalion, blasts the ball during the game against Ecuador in the 2010 CISM Continental Men's Soccer Championship tournament.

Located on the north east coast of South America, Suriname is the smallest independent country on the continent.

"So, there weren't a lot of flights coming in," said Glubzinski. "Half our team didn't even make it the first day. They got there at like four in the morning, and we're playing Brazil that night."

Brazil shut out the United States with a 2-0 victory, going on to win the tournament undefeated.

"That's one of the best teams I've ever played against," Glubzinski said, adding, "but we gave them quite a game."

The U.S. team lost their next match against Barbados 3-1, then scored a 4-3 victory over Ecuador, finishing the tournament in 5th place.

"That's actually closer than it sounds," Glubzinski said. The United States, Ecuador, and Barbados all finished the group games with a 1-2 record. "If we'd scored one more goal we'd have gone on to the semi-

finals," Glubzinski explained.

As the second largest sporting organization in the world and comprised of the armed forces of 133 countries, CISM's mission is to contribute to world peace by bringing the world's armed forces together with friendly competition through sports.

"We had a great time interacting with the different teams," Glubzinski said, adding that many members from the opposing countries swapped T-shirts and souvenirs.

"They're very good athletes," said Glubzinski. "They take a lot of pride in their soccer, so for us to be able to go in there and compete gave us an opportunity to build respect for each other on the soccer field."

"It was a very, very competitive atmosphere," said Glubzinski.

But that's exactly what he likes about soccer, and why he thinks sports play an important part in Army readiness.

"Competition fuses teamwork and cohesiveness better than anything

else," he said. "It brings the best out of teams and brings good teams together."

And like any good team member, Glubzinski is quick to share the spotlight with others.

"I have a lot of teammates here that have given me a lot of support," he said. "I'm very grateful to the Soldiers and leaders here who made extra sacrifices for me to be able to go." He added, "Ultimately it allowed me to represent the Army, the garrison, and our unit in particular."

Glubzinski plans to donate his team jersey and the gold medal from the Armed Forces game to his company, so it will remain in the trophy case long after he's gone. "I'm pretty excited about being able to add that," he said.

"All in all, it was a great experience," he said. "I felt like a professional athlete. I think we had about five days off the whole two months."

"The body's feeling it a little right now," he grinned.

Training exercise instructs Afghan police and NATO forces that train them

Story and photo by
Sgt. Joel Salgado
USAREUR Public Affairs

HOHENFELS, Germany – U.S. Army Europe's Joint Multinational Readiness Center is helping to improve the partnership and skills of U.S., Danish and Afghan security forces by hosting its first Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Team training event.

The POMLT is designed to train Afghan civilian police officers in skills that will help them to perform their law enforcement duties while simultaneously training and mentoring the NATO forces that will deploy to Afghanistan to instruct them in those skills.

The training has another facet as well. While the Danish military police soldiers help the Afghan police officers to improve their skills, the Afghans teach the Danes about some of the challenges the NATO troops will face when they deploy.

The two-week training, which began November 9, consists of two portions. First was classroom instruction during which POMLT students learned the fundamentals of police skills and Afghan law.

"The classroom skills are focused on the policing skills, the Afghan rule of law and the Afghan way of conducting police operations," said Capt. Samuel Meyer, an observer-controller trainer with JMRC's "Raptor" team.

The second portion of the POMLT consists of field exercises designed to allow students to put their classroom



Afghan civilian police officers arrest a 'criminal' in a training scenario during Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Team training in Hohenfels, Germany, Nov. 18, while a Danish military police officer (second from left) observes.

skills to practical use.

The training culminates in a series of situational training exercise (STX) lanes that give the Danes a chance to mentor the Afghan police officers through realistic scenarios they might face in Afghanistan, said Meyer.

"The most important thing today is that they actually do what we've spent the last couple of days learning, with us standing right by their side," said Danish 1st Lt. Steen Christensen during a round of hands-on POMLT training. "They need to show us that they can do it without us telling them what to do."

One portion of the field event focused on survival training that helped build combat skills necessary to operate in a counterinsurgency

environment.

"We teach the tactical classes; the COIN (counterinsurgency) classes; react to direct fire; react to indirect fire; the battle drills," said Meyer.

During their STX lanes training the Afghan police officers put their classroom and survival skills to use during a joint cordon-and-search mission that briefly combined two JMRC training events. Romanian troops taking part in separate Operational Mentor and Liaison Team training and Czech forces role-playing as a foreign military force in that OMLT training supported the POMLT lanes training by setting up a cordon around a mock village.

The POMLT training participants then conducted a search of the village for two

suspected insurgents and collected evidence that helped uncover a nearby weapons cache.

The information on the cache was passed to the Romanian and Czech troops in the cordon, who blocked the suspects' escape and sent a force that secured the cache after a short engagement with insurgent forces.

Mayer said training Afghan police is a key component of building the country's security and helps move Afghanistan closer to the day when it will take full responsibility for its own defense.

"Without a legitimate strong police force Afghanistan or Iraq or any other country we go to aren't going to be able to accomplish the mission," he said.

Pest concerns ban some items in U.S.

Know what can be shipped before mailing packages

by Robert Szostek
*U.S. European Command
Customs and Border Clearance
Agency Public Affairs*

HEIDELBERG, Germany – Many European countries have a tradition of making nativity scenes at Christmas time that Americans love to buy. However, the natural products used to make them are often banned from import to the United States because of the agricultural pests that they could be carrying.

Shoppers should realize they should not mail scenes that contain moss, bark, pinecones, untreated straw or other materials that may harbor insects or plant diseases. Manufactured nativity scenes made with wood (no bark), that are processed can be mailed but are subject to inspection findings in the U.S.

Italy, for example, has a custom of recreating the nativity scene called Presepe. These representations contain miniature clay figures craftsmen have made for hundreds of years. German nativity scenes are called Weihnachtskrippen and contain carved or ceramic figures.

The figurines themselves pose no agricultural risk and can be sent or taken stateside.

However, the figures are often housed in a village setting made of natural bark decorated with peat moss. "The bark frames or peat moss parts of these nativity scenes can contain damaging insects or other pests," said Bill Johnson, director of the European Command's Customs and Border Clearance Agency, "and are therefore prohibited from being imported into the United States."

Customs offices

Bamberg
DSN 469-9312/7460,
CIV 0951-300-
9312/7460

Garmisch
DSN 440-3601,
CIV 08821-750-3601

Grafenwoehr
DSN 475-7249/8901,
CIV 09641-83-
7249/8901

Hohenfels
DSN 466-2012,
CIV 09472-83-2012

Schweinfurt
DSN 353-8847/8846,
CIV 09721-96-
8847/8846

Ansbach
DSN 468-7842,
CIV 0981-183-7842

Visit our official U.S. Army Grafenwoehr Facebook page.
Search "U.S. Army Grafenwoehr"
using Facebook's page search engine.

Policy ensures accountability

Continued from page 1 including benches with overhead cover and running water for pets.

Grafenwoehr's park, near Building 244, and the one at Rose Barracks, across from Little Mike Lake, are scheduled to open soon. According to Smiley, the garrison is waiting on the signs that stipulate the rules and also bag holders and trash receptacles.

Grassroots campaign

Although the pet policy and dog parks are new, the push for responsible pet ownership is not.

Laura Vaughn, president of the Vilseck Community and Spouses Club, and several concerned residents launched the Vilseck Pet Ownership Campaign in March to address pet issues in the community and promote awareness of resources.

One of its most pressing issues was the number of pets abandoned by members of the military community. When Americans leave pets behind, the local community in Amberg has to foot the bill.

According to Theo Schmausser, president of the Amberg Tierheim, about 66 percent of the dogs (and five percent of the cats) at the Amberg Tierheim are from American families. For the past 17 years Amberg residents have given 25 euro cents in the form of taxes to support the tierheim, but this amount will double to 50 euro cents next year. Schmausser said most of the money pays for immunizations and food for the animals.

In addition to the financial burden, the preponderance of animals left by Americans, can make local tierheims reluctant



Molly Hayden takes her dog Sky for a stroll through the neighborhood. The garrison's new pet policy details pet ownership responsibilities, including keeping dogs on a leash when outside government quarters.

to let Americans adopt animals, Vaughn said.

However, through donations of dog food, money and time, Vaughn and other community members are offering an "olive branch" in hopes it will change the way the tierheims view Americans and how they treat their animals.

Its first donation to the Amberg Tierheim this spring was for 500 euros and 200 pounds of dog food. The group continues to collect pet bedding, food, leashes and members travel to the tierheim at least once a month to brush, walk and bathe dogs at the shelter.

"Human contact is important," said Vaughn, who owns a 1-year-old deer Chihuahua "Gunner."

"It lets them know they're

not going to live in this cage forever."

Soldiers from the garrison are getting into the act, as well. Next week, Soldiers from the garrison's Headquarters and Headquarters Company and Warrior Transition Unit will volunteer by cleaning up the outside areas and walking dogs and at the Amberg and Weiden tierheims, Dec. 13.

"Our message is to show that we care and that the vast majority of pet owners are responsible," Smiley said.

Pet SOS

In addition to working with local tierheims, the group also works to find homes for abandoned pets before they get to the tierheim.

During Thanksgiving week, when the club found a rabbit and kitten that were abandoned or had gotten loose, it put out an animal all-points bulletin through its website and email distribution list. Within a day, the animals had a new home and another person even donated a rabbit hutch to the new owner.

Since March, they've placed 20 pets that were either abandoned or whose owners could no longer keep them. But they can always use more help.

Copies of the new pet policy will be available at the housing office and veterinary treatment facilities. For more information on pets that need a home, visit www.vcsconline.com and click on the "VPOC" tab.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Lyttleton Yates

(From left to right) Sgt. 1st Class Bobby Lightner, Joint Multinational Training Command (JMTc) Range Operations; Sgt. 1st Class Richard Gilley, 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment of the 172nd Infantry Brigade; and Staff Sgt. Jarred Evans, a rear detachment platoon sergeant for the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment were inducted into the Sergeant Morales Club at the Grafenwoehr Main Post Tower Theater, recently.

3 NCOs inducted into the Sergeant Morales Club

by Sgt. Maj. Rodney Williams
7th U.S. Army JMTc
Public Affairs

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — Three Bavarian based noncommissioned officers (NCOs) were welcomed into the prestigious Sergeant Morales Club, Nov. 3, during an induction ceremony at Grafenwoehr Main Post Tower Theater.

Sgt. 1st Class Bobby Lightner, currently assigned to Range Operations of the Joint Multinational Training Command (JMTc); Sgt. 1st Class Richard Gilley, 2nd Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment of the 172nd Infantry Brigade; and Staff Sgt. Jarred Evans, a rear detachment platoon sergeant for the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment; were selected on the basis of their achievements and displaying a personal concern for the training, development, and welfare of Soldiers.

"Today is an amazing day in Grafenwoehr. Today, we solidify the absolute excellence portrayed by three outstanding NCOs in the conduct of their daily duties," said JMTc's Command Sgt. Maj. Darius ZaGara. "We are recognizing these three NCOs from across the spectrum of organizations associated with the Bavarian Chapter of the Sergeant Mo-

rales Club."

The U.S. Army in Europe Sergeant Morales Club was established in 1973 to promote the highest ideals of integrity, professionalism and leadership for the enlisted force serving in Europe. Membership to the club is select and gained through a rigorous competitive process.

"It feels great to be inducted into the Sergeant Morales Club," said Evans. "I just want to thank my unit and my family for all of their support."

A leadership trademark of Sergeant Morales Club members is characterized by a personal concern and a willingness to go that extra mile for the training, development and welfare of Soldiers.

"I always strive to lead my Soldiers and do the best that I can," said Gilley. "My Soldiers are what got me here. They present me with the opportunities to do well. To follow in the footsteps of all the other NCOs who have been inducted into the (Sergeant Morales) Club, is truly an honor."

"I profess to you that these three outstanding young NCOs that you see here before you today are not perfect, but very close," added ZaGara. "Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you the three newest members of the prestigious Sergeant Morales Club."

Romeo and Juliet replayed in Uruzgan

Continued from page 4 her four brothers. At no time was the Pashtun woman's Count Paris brought up in conversation.

When that fact was pointed out to the elders of the Pashtun village, suddenly they produced ten witnesses who allegedly claim that she was either married or at the least promised to another man in the Pashtun village.

This modern say telling of forbidden romance might have passed unnoticed by the outside world until the day that the Pashtun woman at the middle of the controversy walked up to the entrance of the firebase asking for help. No she hadn't been kidnapped she told the base commander. No she didn't want to go back to her family. Yes she wanted to stay with the Hazara man she is now married to.

While the soldiers at the firebase were sorting through the details of the Pashtun girl's story, word comes from the front gate that the Hazara girl that was allegedly kidnapped was at the front gate seeking help and protection as well.

The original plan was to keep the two girls on the firebase until the whole 'he said she said' mess could be sorted out. However, that plan quickly changed when word was re-



Col. James Creighton, commander of Combined Team Uruzgan listens to the discussion between tribal elders during a Shura in Khas Uruzgan, Afghanistan.

ceived of people gathering for a protest in the local bazaar.

"I knew that I had to get them off my base as fast as possible." The Special Forces captain said.

With the Romeo and Juliet love story quickly turning into a Westside Story Sharks versus Jets rumble, and having attracted the attention of none other than Hamid Karzai himself, a shura was convened to try and diffuse the situation before violence erupted.

"The Shura was necessary in order to resolve this situation before it got completely out of hand," said Colonel Jim Creighton, the commander of

Combined Team Uruzgan.

So Col. Creighton, with the acting Provincial Governor Khoday Rahim Khan, Provincial Police Chief, Brigadier Juma Gul Hemat and Afghan National Army 4th Brigade Commander Brigadier General Zafar Khan flew to Khas Uruzgan to convene the shura.

Anxious villagers from both tribes lined the sidewalk leading to the building where the shura was to be held, lining up like a human reminder to all involved what was at stake in this meeting. The commanders greeted all of them then got down to business. Arguments from both sides

were heard, before the throng waiting outside was allowed to come in and hear the decision. Ultimately it was decided that an intermediary would travel to the Hazara village and continue the negotiations. Considering this was handled with discussions and not AK-47's shows how far Khas Uruzgan and the Province as a whole have come.

"The people of the district have begun to build respect for their provincial government and requested that the provincial governor help adjudicate the disagreement. It is testament to the growing effectiveness of the Afghan government."

If this were to follow the arc of all great tales of forbidden love, this would be where the description of the lover's death and the sadness of all involved would be told in great detail. However, this time, the story seems destined to have a happy ending. After the Shura was held, the couple was allowed to stay together. Representatives from various nongovernmental organizations and an unnamed third country are working together to grant asylum to the couple, so that not only can they live a long life in love, they can do it without constantly looking over their shoulder in fear.

172nd celebrates partnership with local townships

Continued from page 1 families and enhance the quality of life for both.

"It's nice to know that if I had a question I could have somebody from Germany to ask," said Brittany Loveland, one of the many 172nd spouses in attendance.

"Even people on post here can't answer all your questions about what to do on the German economy."

Her husband agreed.

"It's definitely a good feeling, knowing that somebody is looking out for my family

while I'm gone — not just the U.S. military but German citizens," said Spc. Joshua Loveland.

Sgt. 1st Class David Jones said he expects the program will facilitate a greater mutual understanding of American and German culture for the partnered families.

"Maybe they can come to me if they do not understand something about American culture and we can have a discussion about it," Jones said. "The same goes for me. Maybe we can both learn a little bit."

Be safe this winter by being aware of the road conditions in your community
Call 475-ROAD (7623), CIV 09641-83-7623 for up-to-date information.

Energy tip: Unplug appliances when not in use; they continue to use electricity even if they're not in use.